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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000206

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SUBJECT: FORMER PM FRANCOIS FALL ENTERS THE POLITICAL ARENA, LOOKS TO MOBILIZE CIVIL SOCIETY

REF: CONAKRY 0093

Classified By: A/DCM SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. After resigning from a UN post in Bangui, former Prime Minister Francois Fall has returned to Guinea to enter the political arena. Visibly energized and ready to get to work, Fall described a strategy focused not only on elections, but also on mobilizing a grassroots youth movement to force the CNDD out of power. His approach is markedly different from that of his political rivals, but he has also been absent from the Guinean political scene for some time. Untainted by corruption and viewed as a man of integrity, Fall may be just what is needed to jumpstart a more proactive civic activism. He may ultimately fall prey to the typical political pitfalls of Guinea, but he is certainly a political persona to watch in the months ahead. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Three days after his very public return to Conakry on March 28, Pol/Econ Chief met with former Prime Minister Francois Louceny Fall to discuss his political agenda. Fall had initially met with Charge in February and indicated that he planned to permanently return to Guinea to run for president (reftel). By the end of February, he had resigned from his UN position in Bangui and was preparing to return to Guinea.

ANOTHER NEW POLITICAL PARTY

¶3. (C) Apparently eager to discuss his political plans with the Embassy, Fall had requested the meeting less than 24 hours after his flight had landed in Conakry. He told Pol/Econ Chief that he had already filed the necessary paperwork to create his own political party, the United Forum for Democracy and Change (FRUDEC), which he believed would soon be officially approved by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs. Although he emphasized that the party is multi-ethnic, Fall acknowledged that approximately 80% of his current support base comes from the Soussou ethnic group. He noted that his party is particularly attractive to the country's youths and claimed to have widespread support throughout this demographic, regardless of ethnicity.

¶4. (SBU) Fall said that he had already resumed talks with rival political leaders since arriving a few days earlier. Once his party is official, Fall said he would start participating as a member of Les Forces Vives, Guinea's loose affiliation of political and social leaders pushing for a quick return to civilian rule.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WINNING THE ELECTION

¶5. (C) With respect to his political agenda, Fall said he has two overarching priorities: economic growth and strengthening democratic institutions. However, Fall emphasized that his strategy is not focused solely on winning the election. "There is no guarantee that there will be an election...we need to force Dadis (CNDD President) to leave...and I am going to be very active in this effort," he said. According to Fall, Guinea's current range of political actors is not being proactive enough - they are focusing on how to win the election rather than ensuring that an election takes place. "We need widespread civil pressure to force the action and mobilizing the youth is the key to such an initiative."

DADIS' ALLEGED POLITICAL MANIPULATIONS

¶6. (C) On the subject of CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara, Fall was highly critical. He said that Dadis is secretly hoping to influence the election results because he wants to make sure that whoever is elected is someone that he can influence and later take power from. "For that reason, he is more interested in supporting one of the older candidates, such as Jean-Marie Dore or Alpha Conde, because they will only be able to serve one or two terms." Fall commented that "Dadis talks a lot," but that in reality, he has not mentioned, let alone begun to address, the country's real problems, namely the deteriorating economic situation and the continued lack of water and electricity.

¶7. (C) According to Fall, the only way to make sure Dadis
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fades into the background is to motivate the population for the elections. "I want to make Conakry hot...we need to have people out in the street sending a clear message," he said.

BUILDING SUPPORT

¶8. (C) When asked to estimate the level of his political support, Fall said that it was still too early since he had only recently returned to Guinea. He admitted that most of his supporters are centralized in Conakry, but that he plans to soon launch his campaign in the interior. Fall mentioned that the rival RPG (Rally for the Guinean People - Alpha Conde) party is falling apart and that many of its youths are switching allegiances in favor of Fall. Fall said that he has also been courting members of other political parties, particularly the youth, and claimed that many have expressed interest in joining his party.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Fall was clearly energized. His strategy, which seems to focus on mobilizing youths in a very public and perhaps risky way, is markedly different from that of his rivals. While other political leaders are being careful to avoid antagonizing the CNDD, Fall seems to harbor no such reservations. For the time being, he seems less interested in talking about elections and more interested in making sure that the CNDD understands that its hold on power must be short-lived.

¶10. (C) At the same time, Fall is newly returned to the Guinean political scene. He may very well fall prey to the same dynamics that have crippled the opposition for years (i.e. political infighting, corruption, self-promotion, etc.). However, if he can successfully mobilize the country's youths as he says, he may very well provide a much needed impetus to what has been a largely disappointing effort on the part of civil society. He also may be just the

person to do it. His political "persona" is largely untainted since he is not viewed as one of the problematic political leaders of the past. He is also seen as a man of integrity for his decision to resign from office under the late President Conte. It will be interesting to see what kind of political support Fall can muster -- and what he does with it in the months ahead. END COMMENT.

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